

ARIZONA METH PROJECT

Economic Study Estimates Meth Abuse Costs the U.S. \$23.4 Billion

Phoenix, Arizona—February 4, 2009— A RAND Corporation study released today, “The Economic Cost of Methamphetamine Use in the United States,” estimates the national cost of Meth use, for one year, is \$23.4 billion. The study represents the first comprehensive assessment of the annual costs of methamphetamine abuse.

Researchers found that methamphetamine use imposes a significant and disproportionate burden on both individuals and society through money spent on treatment, healthcare, and social services, as well as the costs of crime and lost productivity associated with the drug. These findings highlight the continued need for proven prevention programs, such as the Arizona Meth Project, that can help curb future costs by reducing Meth use and addiction.

“This study puts our state’s Meth problem in stark perspective,” said Arizona Attorney General Terry Goddard. “Arizona cannot continue to shoulder Meth’s staggering financial and human costs. We must put an end to this costly epidemic by continuing to invest in prevention efforts such as the Arizona Meth Project.”

Law enforcement and the criminal justice system bear the greatest financial burden of Meth use, more than 15%—\$4 billion—of the total costs associated with the drug each year. These costs are especially high in Arizona. According to the Arizona Arrestee Reporting Information Network, 36% of arrestees entering Maricopa County jails tested positive for Meth.ⁱ The Federal Trade Commission ranks the state #1 in the nation for Meth-related identity theftⁱⁱ, and it is estimated that 50% of arrests for burglaries in Arizona are Meth-related.ⁱⁱⁱ Arizona also experiences high levels of violent, organized crime associated with Meth trafficking across the border.

The problem of Meth abuse in Arizona starts at a young age. According to the 2008 *Arizona Youth Survey*, the average age of first-time Meth use of teens surveyed in the state is 14 years old.^{iv} The Arizona Meth Project focuses its efforts on preventing young people from ever trying Meth with a powerful prevention campaign and focused message of “Not Even Once.”

Launched in 2007, the Arizona Meth Project is a large-scale prevention program aimed at Meth use through public service messaging, public policy, and community outreach. Recent research shows that the Arizona Meth Project has already had a dramatic impact on Meth use among teens and the way they view the drug. In October, the Arizona Criminal Justice Commission released the results of the 2008 *Arizona Youth Survey*, a bi-annual assessment of substance abuse and other high-risk youth behavior in Arizona. The survey findings showed that since the launch of the Arizona Meth Project’s prevention campaign, between 2006 and 2008, youth methamphetamine use has significantly declined—by more than 50 percent in many categories.^v

“Our state has a serious Meth problem that we are working to reduce with the Arizona Meth Project,” said Maricopa County Supervisor Don Stapley. “We need to continue to communicate strong prevention messages to sustain the progress we have already made. By investing a relatively small amount in prevention we could save millions of dollars in the costs of long-term incarceration, healthcare and social services.”

“Our goal in sponsoring this study was to provide a definitive economic cost estimate of the Meth problem that legislators and regulators can consider while establishing social priorities,” said Tom Siebel, founder and chairman of the Meth Project. “This appears to be a preventable problem. The staggering economic and human costs of Meth use can be avoided.”

To view the full results of the RAND study, visit www.methproject.org.

To view the complete 2008 *Arizona Youth Survey* report, please visit the Arizona Criminal Justice Commission’s website at www.azcjc.gov or the Arizona Meth Project’s website at www.arizonamethproject.org.

About the Arizona Meth Project

The Arizona Meth Project is a large-scale prevention campaign that implements a range of advertising and community action programs to reduce methamphetamine use. Launched 2007, the Arizona Meth Project leverages a proven model that combines extensive research with a hard-hitting, integrated media campaign. The Arizona Meth Project is established by the Meth Project, a national non-profit organization headquartered in Palo Alto, California, aimed at significantly reducing first-time Meth use through public service messaging, public policy, and community outreach. The Meth Project is a project by the Thomas and Stacey Siebel Foundation. For more information, visit www.arizonamethproject.org.

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ⁱ Arizona State University, Center for Violence Prevention and Community Safety, Arizona Arrestee Reporting Information Network, Annual Adult Report 2007, June 2008

ⁱⁱ Federal Trade Commission, Identity Theft Victim Complain Data, Identity Theft Clearinghouse, 2007

ⁱⁱⁱ Arizona Attorney General’s Office, 2006

^{iv} Arizona Criminal Justice Division, 2008 Arizona Youth Survey, *Shining Light on Arizona Youth*

^v Arizona Criminal Justice Division, 2008 Arizona Youth Survey, *Shining Light on Arizona Youth*